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THE  
IDOL CHILD

49. 1696.

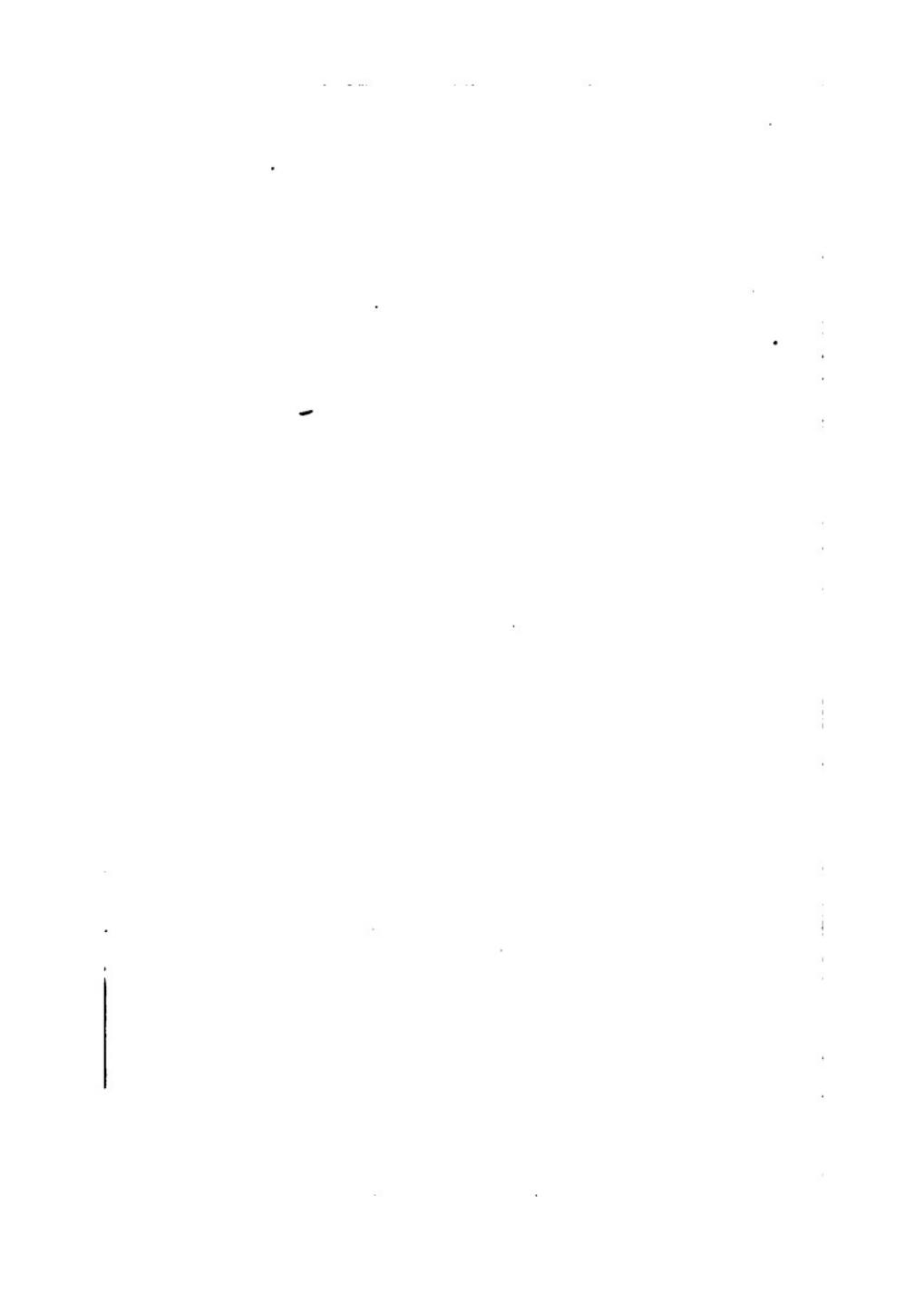


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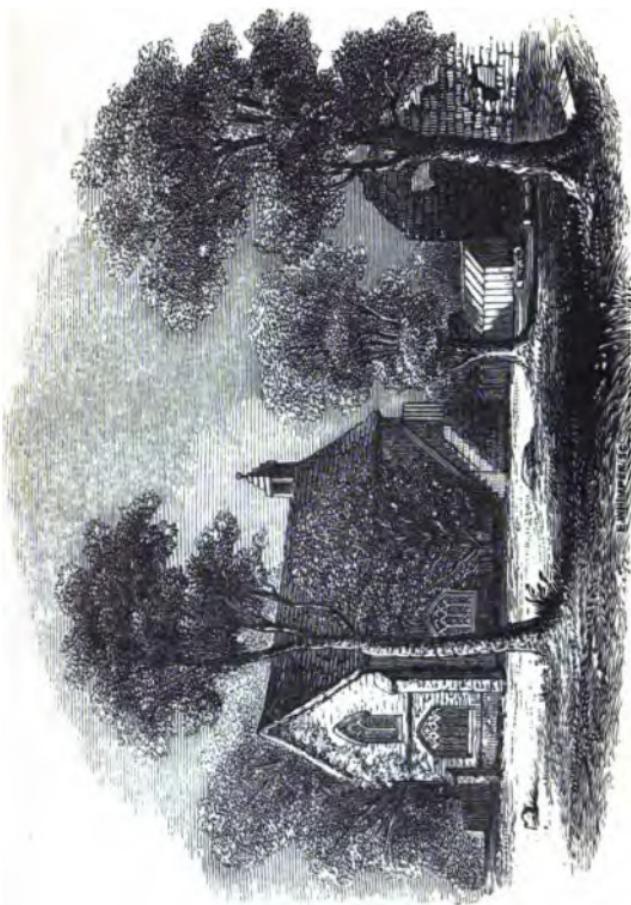
49. 1696.



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"Beneath the shadow of one of these lie the loved remains of THE LOST CHILD."—See page 68.

THE  
I D O L C H I L D.

*Addressed to Mothers.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MEMORIALS OF BERTIE," ETC.

" Whatever passeth as a cloud between  
The mental eye of faith and things unseen,  
Causing that brighter world to disappear,  
And seem less lovely, and its hopes less clear,  
This is our world, our idol, though it bear  
Affection's impress, or devotion's air."

" That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as carved stones, polished after the similitude of a palace." —Psa. cxliv. 12.

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## ADDRESS TO MOTHERS.

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MY DEAR SISTERS,—Being myself a mother, and accustomed to calculate the probable results of the lessons of the day, I cannot but feel deeply convinced of the everlasting importance of a faithful discharge of those delightful, though sometimes arduous duties, which devolve upon us in the training of our beloved children. These are duties, upon the right discharge or neglect of which hang suspended, in fearful jeopardy, the eternal destinies of those young immortals. Nor can I but observe, with deep regret, the lamentable fact that many mothers, who, while loving their children even as their own lives, loading them with every indulgence within their reach, and alarmed at their slightest indisposition, do yet so close their eyes to the paramount importance of the interests of their

undying souls, as wholly to neglect the ten thousand times ten thousand opportunities afforded them of *early* leading their little ones to Jesus! Too often, on the contrary, they occupy their precious and invaluable time in the most trivial, if not baneful pursuits.

Mothers have the earliest and best seasons (*all their own*) for instilling into the *infant* mind the first elements of Divine Truth. Would they bestow a tithe of the time and pains, so unsparingly used in impressing their children with the fact that "Mamma loves them," in making known to them that much more delightful and important truth, that *God loves them*, we should be in possession of far more numerous illustrations of those cheering words, stamped with the authority of the Lord Jesus—"Out of the mouths of *babes* and *SUCKLINGS* thou hast perfected praise."

An elderly and pious man once declared to me that he distinctly remembered thinking about God as he lay in his cradle. This was related to a lady, with whom I am intimately acquainted, who, after hearing it, and, as she admitted, having some doubt as to the veracity

of the statement, determined instantly to test the possibility of such early teaching. Her youngest child, a little girl, fifteen months old, was toddling about the room at the time. Her mamma, taking her up, carried her to the window, and, pointing upwards to the sky, said, "Baby, look up there; a good Pa lives there. He loves baby. He is looking at her; oh, how he loves her!" At the second lesson this was repeated, with the addition that the little one was told to look at her tiny hands; and then, that this same good Pa had made them; after which she was directed to look up and say "Ta." The baby instantly looked up, stretched out her little arms towards heaven, and exclaimed, with a sweet smile—"Ta!" Thus, in two lessons, each of a few moments' duration, my friend had succeeded in teaching her little one far more than the good man had professed to know. She had taught the baby not only of the existence of the Almighty Father, but his character and love to her; with the truths that he had made her, and now beheld her; and had also instilled into her infant mind the first principle of gratitude.

If a similar course were universally pursued by mothers with their infant children, there would be fewer complaints of them at a more advanced age. How frequently we hear from pious parents lamentations like these: "My children are diligent in the pursuit of everything but holiness and heaven. They are very amiable, and loving everything that is lovely and excellent, excepting God!" Alas! I fear that, too often, the early, tender, susceptible season of infancy had been allowed to pass away for ever all unimproved. The mind had been left *fallow too long*, and the enemy had *sowed tares before* the parents thought it *ready* for the *reception* of the *good seed*. *They began* to sow when the ground was *pre-occupied*, and so the tares sprang up, and choked the good seed. In other cases, the good seed is not sown at all, until the child has imperceptibly slipped along to a season of responsibility. In many cases, sickness suddenly overtakes him, and the bewildered parent dares not intrude upon his sufferings the long-avoided subject; she hesitates another hour—delirium ensues; then total unconsciousness, and *he dies!* Dies, without that

knowledge which could have been so *easily imparted* while yet an infant, or, at least, during those long years of protracted privileges. But no; his tender, affectionate mother has *let him die* without that knowledge which to know is life eternal! And now her agony is insupportable, and, in the bitterness of her inconsolable anguish, she cries, "Would to God that I had died for thee, my son, my son! The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my child is not saved!"

Mothers! Jehovah beseeches you to be reconciled to Him,—that ye be not blind guides, but able to lead your little ones *straight to Jesus!* Oh, for the sake of your own peace,—for the sake of your children's undying souls, let not your Godless, Christless, prayerless lives hinder them from being saved!

And if you know that truth which *alone* makes wise unto salvation—"The truth about Jesus!"—suffer nothing to prevent you from daily and hourly bringing up your children "In the *nurture* and admonition of the Lord." Interweave the sweet, untiring theme of *Jesus' love to them*, into the occupations, the studies,

and even the relaxations of the day. Are they joyous? remind them that their happiness was purchased by the price of Jesus' sorrows. . Fear not—this knowledge shall but enhance their joy. Are they sorrowful? lead them to contemplate Him who bore their griefs and carried their sorrows. Let *Jesus died for thee*, be the subject of your discourse, the burden of your song, until the fascinating music of the theme shall win their wayward ear, and they shall be found listening to the voice of the charmer, charming so wisely, and singing, in the fulness of their overjoyed hearts—"He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." There shall be no dread, no alarm, no despair, beside the dying bed of that child who "knows the joyful sound!"—but instead, shall be given, "Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

It is in the earnest hope of arousing some hitherto listless mother to the delightful duty of training her children to "know the Lord," that I have written this little memoir. The incidents of the narrative are known to many to be faith-

fully represented ; the names of the individuals introduced are alone fictitious.

Another prominent reason for its publication is, the melancholy truth that many a mother and child have been severed in death, *because* the mother has loved the child *more than God*—her misplaced affections having laid the necessity (if I may so speak) upon the God of Love, to lay her idol in the dust.

The day is at hand when our children will require to have their feet upon the “Rock of Ages,” to outlive the storm. Let us not delay to lead them there, lest the enemy come in like a flood, and we behold the light of our eyes torn from our side, and swallowed up in the vortex of error and delusion.

“ That day for which all other days were made ”

will soon dawn upon us, in all its stupendous majesty and changeless decisions ; and, oh, should our children not be found on the right hand of the Judge, having never been shown the *way* to that position of security—how shall we bear to hear, from a well-known and much-loved voice, the exceeding bitter cry, “ Alas ! my

mother! But for your neglect I had been saved! You never showed me the way of salvation! You never cared for my soul, and I am lost! lost!! lost!!!"

In the earnest prayer that the Blessed Spirit will vouchsafe to use this unpretending little volume as a vehicle of truths, so importantly affecting the eternal interests of our own souls, and the souls of our beloved children,

I remain, my dear sisters,

Affectionately and faithfully,

Yours in Christ Jesus,

BERTIE'S MOTHER.

January 22, 1849.

# THE IDOL CHILD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE COUNTRY LODGINGS.

IT was a lovely evening in the height of the summer of 1845. Memory falls back upon it with a vivid realisation of those incidents, which raise it in bold relief upon a crowded page; and that, because it ushered in the interesting actors, of a transient, but most eventful drama.

The village, to which I must first introduce my readers, was situated on the summit of a hill, in the neighbourhood of a large sea-port town, on the western coast of England. From its commanding position, and dry foundation of old grey sandstone, it was considered a very healthful locality by the inhabitants of the neighbouring town. On this account, in the summer season, it was thronged with visitors, who came and returned, for the most part, with the swallows. It might easily be known when these

migratory friends were expected, by the busy preparations which were made by almost every household in the village, in the hope of being most successful in early securing the temporary sojourners. The doors and window-shutters, as well as the garden-gates and palings, were painted a bright green. The window-frames were of dazzling whiteness, and so were the frilled, plaited, and festooned dimity draperies, which were as spotless as if all the bleaching properties of sun and snow had been secured to whiten them.

The earliest comers had abundant scope for the exercise of their most fastidious choice. From the time-worn antique hall,—with its large, low, panelled parlours, and deeply recessed windows;—spacious and lofty kitchen, hung about with a hundred or more mirrors, in brass, copper, and pewter culinary utensils; and large airy bedrooms with polished floors;—down to the humble thatched cottage, which could only boast “the parlour,” almost every house had in its clean windows—“Lodgings,” in a bold text-hand; or, more neatly written, “Apartments,”—on a small card, suspended by a narrow blue ribbon.

Among the many candidates for the favour of the rusticating portion of the community was

the occupant of a white house, with Venetian shades, partly concealing and partly displaying a flower-stand, on which were tastefully arranged a few geraniums in full bloom, some dark green myrtles, and graceful fuschias, with their long, pendant, crimson and purple flowers. This house, standing in the midst of its pretty garden, commanded from the back windows a panoramic view of one of the finest ports of Great Britain. In the foreground were sloping meadows and corn-fields, waving their rich crops of fast-ripening grain. Beyond these lay a noble river, ever changing its chameleon tints as it received within its mirror-bosom the shadowy, fantastic shapes of ten thousand clouds, sometimes of fleecy whiteness, at others of deepening gloom, crimson, and grey, and gold—

“ Like locks of thousand cherubim shorn off,  
And hung about the temples of morn and eve.”

At one time it appeared placid and waveless as a sea of glass, as though it had forgotten how to curl a ripple; and yet, in a few hours, a darkly heaving swell might be discerned, followed shortly by the rush of the “white horses,” crest over crest, like an impatient host urged on to the attack. Beyond this lay a long line of docks, reminding one of a crowded yet leafless forest; at the back of which arose a huge mass of ten-

storied warehouses, tall chimneys, grey-turreted towers, domes, and gilded spires, which, from amidst the din and bustle of commercial tumult, still pointed upwards, uttering, in silent but eloquent language—

Mortals, be wise!  
And prepare for the skies!

Nearer to the suburbs might be plainly seen the street-rows, crossing and intersecting each other in almost countless lines; while here and there a large windmill was flapping its broad sails above them all. Then began to glisten in the sunshine the stuccoed fronts of cheerful looking villa-houses, to which the busy and successful tradesman had retired, a little from the noisy street. The wealthier merchants had fallen back still farther from the deafening din, and drawn nearer to the green, sombre trees and quiet fields, until at last the eye rested on the dark dingle and the waving wood which fringed the banks of the now narrowing river.

The front windows of this house-elect overlooked a fine old homestead, with its massive door, surmounted with the inscription, "*Labor omnia vincit.*" A sun-dial, fixed in a blank stone recess, looked like the hoary chronicler of generations passed away.

Mrs. Lesley, the proprietress of the white

house, had let her spare rooms for the accommodation of some friends expected by a resident in the neighbourhood. These were, a lady and her little son, whom she had brought over from India to place at school, and with whom she was spending a few months, previous to the dreaded separation. They were also accompanied by an Ayah, or coloured female servant.

It was on the summer evening, of which I at first spoke, that Mrs. Lesley was awaiting the arrival of her new lodgers. She had sent out her two little boys and the baby for a walk, while she and her domestic had been busy all day, in making the pretty parlour and bed-room engaged, as bright and inviting as possible. All her stock of ornaments were in requisition. The vases, shells, fossils, china lambs and dogs, were all clean washed. A small fire, just enough to give a cheering aspect, was made, and a scrap-book, with other volumes of plates and poetry, were laid upon the table.

Mrs. Lesley had looked in again and again, to satisfy herself that nothing had been neglected or forgotten. The hours rolled slowly by, and she had more than once sat down to meditate upon the trying position of the expected strangers, till her heart heaved in sympathy with their sorrows.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE ARRIVAL.

AT about half-past nine two hackney-coaches jostled through the most uneven street of that most irregular village, and drove up to Mrs. Lesley's garden-gate. A thundering rap from one of the drivers, who inquired if they were at the right house, soon aroused the inmates. A servant-maid was sent out to render some assistance, while Mrs. Lesley waited at the door to receive and welcome the strangers.

In a few moments a lady of interesting and prepossessing countenance, dressed in a profusion of satin, lace, and jewellery, ascended the steps. She held by the hand a beautiful boy, scarcely five years old; tall and agile, with fine, intelligent and expressive features. Behind them walked the Ayah, with her bright laughing eyes, dark complexion, and jet-black glossy hair. She carried in one hand a smart gilt cage, containing a green parroquet, and on the other arm a tortoise-shell kitten. Then followed the carmen with a quantity of enormous trunks, packages, and sundry toys too numerous to particularise. These were soon safely deposited, and the

trivers despatched with nearly double fares. The listless, easy-going Ayah was seeking a dozen things at once, and not succeeding in the discovery of one. The lady, whom I must introduce as Mrs. Stuart, was ordering, scolding, and storming at the panic-stricken Ayah, in a most authoritative tone. The little boy, Alfred, tired as he was, hunted incessantly for all the mischief within reach. The parroquet screamed discordantly, and the tortured kitten mewed most piteously. Mrs. Lesley had twenty requests made her in as many minutes, and, with the assistance of two servants, could not keep pace with the demands. "The rooms were very comfortable, but at least half the furniture must be removed to make room for the little Alfred to play about. Every ornament must be taken away or they would be broken, and the trees especially must be instantly removed lest the child's health should be injured." Mrs. Lesley, whose little ones had been safely "tucked up" in their cot-beds some time before, directed her attention chiefly to the little Indian boy,—so wild, so beautiful, and yet so affectionate! She forgave the dismantling of her rooms and the confusion of her household, and leaving its rearrangement to her servants, sat down upon one of the uncorded trunks, and taking the little

stranger on her knee, kindly offered to undress him. At first he resolutely refused, but, won over by her soothing attentions, he looked up confidently in her face, and said, "Misse Lessee sall tate my sots off." From that auspicious moment Mrs. Lesley acquired an influence over the untaught and hitherto uncontrollable child, the effects of which can never be fully estimated until they shall be revealed amongst the "many mansions."

Mrs. Lesley observed with sorrow that little Alfred went prayerless to bed. They had been preserved by Infinite kindness, and here they were safely arrived at their destination; unsolicited love had accompanied them all the way. What a fitting opportunity for impressing the child with a sense of the goodness of God! How salutary had been the lesson of gratitude! Had Mrs. Stuart taken her little boy to her side, and, in few words, ran over the sweet subject somewhat thus:—"Ah! here is my dear boy, all safe after our journey; not a single hair on this little head injured. If God had not watched over us, a wheel might have come off the coach, or a restless horse have run away with us and dashed us all in pieces! But God has never forgotten us. A little sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice. Mamma does not love her

dear child half so much as God loves him. Mamma never took such care of Alfred as to count how many hairs are on this little weary head. But God has numbered every one! Alfred is not too tired to thank his best friend." And kneeling, with her loved child, "before the throne," in a few words poured out the incense of praise; entreating his continued care during the night, and imploring the pardon of all unworthiness for His dear sake who suffered the punishment thereof.—The child had never forgotten the precious lesson! But when his dear mamma had returned to her distant home, and he in his lonely bed had turned his tearful face towards the wall, had been comforted with the remembrance of the blessed truth his mother taught him, that "God is love." And nestling beneath the pinions of his ever-watchful Providence, had found more than mother, home, and friends in Him! But, alas! Alfred and his mother knew not God, nor did they acknowledge Him in all their ways!

## CHAPTER III.

## THE ACQUAINTANCE MADE.

MRS. LESLEY endeavoured, to the utmost of her power, to make the strangers feel at home; and in a very few days Mrs. Stuart had become tolerably familiar with her hostess. One subject was ever uppermost in the mother's mind, namely, the approaching separation from her beloved child. It was very pitiful to see the hold this dreaded event had taken upon her, and still more so to observe the means used to shut out the thought. Poor Mrs. Stuart! She was committing two evils; she was forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to herself cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water.

On one occasion, when complaining to Mrs. Lesley of her impending trial, and receiving from her auditress the tenderest sympathy, blended with such remarks as seemed to Mrs. Lesley the best fitted to induce her friend to pour out all her complaints into the deeply sympathising ear of Jesus, Mrs. Stuart became more confiding than heretofore, and gave Mrs. Lesley a hasty, but explanatory outline of her position.

In early life she had been sent out to India for the purpose of making, in worldly parlance, "a good match." She soon succeeded in attracting the attention of an elderly gentleman, a captain in the British army, to whom, with the full consent of her friends, she was, in a short time, united. After her marriage, in which she at least had been actuated by mere mercenary motives, Mrs. Stuart soon had reason to lament the companionless position in which she found herself. Loathing her very life, and knowing no peace or happiness, she sought to satisfy the cravings of her mind by the visionary pleasures of romance. Thus she passed an ideal existence among the soul-destroying fascinations of fiction, interrupted only by the ungovernable passions of her husband and the obsequious attentions of his slaves. After some years the monotony of her life was broken by the birth of this only child. The captain grew almost jealous of the baby boy, and insisted upon her leaving the nursery and presiding as usual at the table, to entertain his friends and boon companions. The little one was very early attacked by a fever incidental to the children of Europeans in that climate. His mother watched over him with tireless love, alternately soothing the sick child and giving way to her own passionate grief, as she timidly anticipated the possibility of

a separation from her now Idol Child. A succession of attacks rendered it imperative to hasten with the child to the cooler air of the mountains. As the little one advanced in age, the recurrences of fever became so frequent that her medical adviser urged her to take the young invalid to England, and place him with some family where his health would be carefully attended to. For this purpose she had arrived, and having been met by her father in London had accompanied him to his country seat. An incident, illustrative of the spoiled character of the little fellow, was some time afterwards related to Mrs. Lesley by his grandpapa. The old gentleman said that, as they passed through one of the thronged streets of the metropolis, Alfred suddenly refused to go any farther with the Ayah ; and, so violent was his display of passion, that, refusing the hands of either mamma or grandpapa, he flung himself upon the pavement, venting his displeasure in Hindostanee. As soon as they reached Mrs. Stuart's paternal home they were very comfortable. The beautiful Indian child soon became the pet, and, at the same time, the dread of the whole household. One day the parroquet got out of its cage, and then little Alfred climbed the trees after it like a squirrel, to the indescribable terror of the assembled

family. - However, their admiration and fear were soon removed. In a very short time Mrs. Stuart learned that measles and scarlet fever had appeared in the adjacent village, upon which account the carriage was instantly ordered out, and, in the utmost confusion, the mother and child, with the Ayah, hurried away to a little watering-place on the coast, at a great distance from the infected air. From thence, wishing to be nearer to a distant relative, and also to await the arrival of a brother from abroad, whom she had not seen for many years, she had engaged Mrs. Lesley's rooms. The time was now fast approaching when she was expected to return to India ; and she confessed that she was prolonging the interim by any pretext, ostensible or otherwise, which suggested itself.

Mrs. Lealey easily discerned the sad truth, that Mrs. Stuart was living "without God and without hope in the world." She recognised in this child a token of affectionate regard from the source of Infinite love, snatched thanklessly from the hand which bestowed it, exalted to the throne of her affections as a rival, while the kind donor was entirely forgotten. She discovered, also, that there was even yet a vacuum in the soul which only God could fill; a restless and troubled mind, to be calmed alone by that peace

which passeth all understanding. Nor did Mrs. Lesley neglect this important opportunity, but endeavoured to lead Mrs. Stuart to a consideration of the subject in the light of eternity. She tried to assist her in recognising the hand of God in her affliction as a hand of love. She pointed out the useless and unsatisfactory nature of her pursuits, and showed the way to a fountain of living water. She even ventured to warn her of her idolatrous worship, and its probably disastrous consequences, and concluded her remarks in the sweet words of Dr. Watts,

“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee!”

But her companion replied in her own version of that sentiment of the idolaters of a long past age, who said, “Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits.” Isaiah, xxx. 10.

## CHAPTER IV.

## GREEN PASTURES.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."—Isaiah, xl. 11.

IT was Mrs. Lesley's custom to assemble her family, morning and evening, around the domestic altar. She was well assured that the time spent in the exercise of these refreshing privileges was never *lost time*, but that, on the contrary, everything went on much better after the soul had been invigorated by deep draughts from that fountain of Divine Truth—the Bible; her favourite selections for their reading and contemplation being ever "the things concerning Jesus." These it was her custom to trace from "Moses and all the prophets" down to the still clearer light of the Gospels and Epistles, at one time the selection being from the Old and at another the New Testaments. These portions it was her aim to explain so lucidly that the children could not fail to understand and be interested in; after which she prayed with them, suiting her petitions to their varied necessities. Her prayers were short, after the pattern of

that beautiful model—the Lord's, so that no one was wearied, but rather refreshed.

Thus, her children were clustered about her knees, and her servants quietly seated, when little Alfred came shouting to the door. He, of course, was not aware how the inmates were occupied, which he no sooner discovered than he stood at the door abashed, and listened. For the first few times he could not be persuaded to enter the room, but duly each morning, after his discovery, was found "waiting at the posts of the doors." However, upon being kindly and perseveringly encouraged, he drew nearer and nearer, until at length he sat in the centre of the little group, close to Mrs. Lesley's knee, anxiously catching up every word which fell from her lips. It was very gratifying to Mrs. Lesley to make room for the dear child. Her own children, who received "line upon line (and) precept upon precept," were immediately caused to give place to the little untaught stranger, Mrs. Lesley inwardly determining that while he sojourned beneath her roof he should at least drink of "the sincere milk of the word." The coloured Ayah meanwhile squatted before the fire, and heard also that testimony which makes wise the simple. Mrs. Lesley's children were acquainted with many beautiful hymns and in-

teresting books about "Holy children when they die," to which Alfred would sit listening for hours, while they were either read or recited.

A very short portion of the day was occupied in set lessons, it being Mrs. Lesley's plan to educate her children *all the day long*. Plants, flowers, and trees; insects, birds, and animals; corn-fields, green woods, and shady lanes; the useful arts of life, and the productions of distant countries; the habits of the savage, and the customs of the civilised, were all laid under tribute. These lessons were sometimes taught from a picture, and sometimes elicited by passing circumstances. She neglected not to discover God in everything, and to call upon her little charge to *trace his footprints in all his works*. Thus every fleeting hour was adding to their stock of knowledge.

Nor yet were their dealings with each other suffered to pass without a watchful supervision. If one wronged another, the action was brought to the line and plummet of Divine law, when conviction, restitution, and an appeal to God and his brother for pardon soon followed. And when one offended or wounded another, their mamma read or repeated to them such passages as the following:—"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that

we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother."—"Love is of God."—"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." Upon hearing these melting words, with their high authority, their asperities were soon softened, and the children speedily clasped in each other's arms. The fact commended itself to their consciences, that their mother ever led their erring feet by an infallible guide,—by that word which was a light unto their path. And thus her children arose and called her blessed; they loved her more than all the world besides, and often, when she was too busy to receive their caresses, would they slip behind her and kiss her very dress. Little Alfred, also, in a few days, followed her about the house like a pet lamb, drinking in instruction *about Jesus*, at every unoccupied moment in which he could attract her attention.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE PURSUITS.

"(She) feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned (her) aside."—  
Isaiah, xliv. 20.

ALFRED STUART was, without doubt, an Idol Child, inasmuch as his mother loved him *better* than she loved God. But, to say the truth, her very worship was mingled with so much neglect of the best interests of its unconsecrated object, accompanied by such wayward and changeful passions, that it bore along with it the seeds of its own punishment, daily germinating in dissatisfaction, ennui, and self-reproach. For instance, no matter how mischievously Alfred was occupied, so that he did not disturb mamma while absorbed in the imaginary trials of some visionary heroine, and threading the intricacies of a labyrinth of falsehood; but should the "darling child" venture to ask at such a moment a single "How?" or "Why?" in all the sphere of created Truth, he would at least be pettishly snapped at, if not peevishly slapped. And then, when that nausea, which will hang about the enervated mind, became intolerable; when the "stupid librarian" had failed to return by the

jaded servant the *right book*, then relief was sought amidst more tangible, but not less vexatious, realities. The dressmaker was accordingly summoned, and a score of alterations at least, if not improvements, undertaken. The dyer was harassed by repeatedly failing to produce some particular tint of colour. The jeweller was sent for, and the diamonds, for the third time, reset in a new device. After all this, a great reaction would take place. Some unwelcome and reproachful feeling arose, when she at once determined to incur no more expenses, excepting in the gratification of Alfred's desires. To effect this, the little boy was taken to the town for various weary sittings for his likeness, with a couple of artists at the same time,—the one for a miniature portrait, the other a full-length figure. One of the artists was about relinquishing his undertaking, until it was proposed that he should attend at Mrs. Lesley's residence, that she might there exercise her influence over the almost uncontrollable impulses of the child. She easily succeeded in keeping him quiet by narrating to him Bible histories, for these never failed to win an attentive ear from Alfred.

One day, soon after this, Alfred, who was accustomed to the most unbounded indulgence, had been controlled in some trifle that instantly

awakened those feelings of resentment which he had been suffered generally to display unchecked. After his passion had subsided, he was sent out with the Ayah to walk, and as usual ran into Mrs. Lesley's room for a kiss. She, being aware of the circumstance, took occasion to speak to him of his sin. She endeavoured first to show him the nature of sin, and spoke of its eternal consequences; pointing out to him the danger of going out, or indeed of remaining for a single instant with unpardoned sin upon his soul. The little fellow, broken down with a sense of guilt, inquired, "What shall I do?" Mrs. Lesley now spoke of the pity and love of God to him in this state of danger. She explained to him how and why God hated sin, and yet how much he loved his soul, and had found out the *only thing that could be done to save* him, which was to lay the punishment of his sin *upon his own dear Son Jesus!* "And, now," said Mrs. Lesley, "since Jesus, who *never sinned*, has borne the punishment of your sin, God can forgive you for Jesus' sake, and, oh! how he wishes to pardon you, *for he loves you!*"—"Shall I ask him now?" inquired Alfred, with much earnestness. "What shall I say, Misses Lessee?" continued he, kneeling down reverently, with clasped hands. Mrs. Lesley first

prompted a few words of thanksgiving for the love which had given up Jesus to die in his stead, and then an entreaty of forgiveness for his dear sake.

When he arose Mrs. Lesley folded the little disciple in her arms, and affectionately kissed him, remarking, "You now know that I forgive you, Alfred?"—"Yes, Missee Lessee," replied the grateful child. "Ah!" rejoined she, "but God loves you far more tenderly, and forgives you far more freely!" All the burden was now gone, and he went out rejoicing that "with God there is plenty of forgiveness." From this time little Alfred was observed to have become an altered child. There was a growing gentleness distinguishable, and an evident self-curbing of his naturally violent temper. Every member of the household, including his mamma and nurse, observed the change, but they did not all know that he had "been with Jesus!"

It was on the following Sabbath morning that Alfred, who had long wished to accompany Mrs. Lesley to worship, had at length succeeded in persuading his mamma to take him to church. Mrs. Stuart, fearful of his properly conducting himself during the service, took the precaution of engaging Mrs. Lesley to accompany them, to ensure his good behaviour, it being his first

attendance upon public worship. The fear of levity was groundless, but his anxiety to understand every part of the service occasioned many a "Why?" to find an irresistible utterance from his earnest and inquiring mind.

On the evening of the day Alfred slipped into Mrs. Lesley's room to hear her read to her children, and listened attentively, for the second time, by particular request, to that beautiful hymn—

" I think when I hear that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here amongst men,  
How he called little children as lambs to his fold,  
I should like to have been with them then.

" I wish that his hand could be placed on my head,  
That his arm could be thrown around me,  
And that I might have heard his kind voice when he said,  
Let the little ones come unto me !

" But still to his footstool in prayer I may go,  
And ask for a share of his love,  
For if I thus earnestly seek him below,  
I shall see him and hear him above.

" In that beautiful place he is gone to prepare  
For all who are washed and forgiven,  
And many dear children are gathering there,  
For of such is the kingdom of heaven.

" But thousands and thousands who wander and fall,  
Never heard of that heavenly home;  
I should like them to know there is room for them all,  
And that Jesus has bidden them come.

" I long for the joy of that heavenly time,  
When Jesus shall reign in his rest,  
And the dear little children of every clime  
Shall crowd to his arms and be blest!"

"Alfred! Alfred!" cried Mrs. Stuart, at the very top of her voice, "where are you?"—"Here I am, mamma, only hearing Missee Lessee read such beautiful hymns; do come, mamma," said the dear child. "I cannot think," continued Mrs. Stuart, scarcely suppressing her sense of annoyance (not at the intrusion of the child, but of the subject upon his attention), "I cannot think why you are always troubling Mrs. Lesley; why do you not remain with me?"—"Because, mamma, I want to hear these pretty hymns about Jesus," replied the ingenuous boy. Mrs. Lesley placed a chair, and invited Alfred's mamma to join the happy circle, assuring her that he was at all times a welcome guest. Mrs. Stuart took the proffered seat, and, at her little son's persevering request, heard some of the hymns. She could not help replying graciously to the anxious inquiries of the delighted child—"Mamma, are they not pretty? they are all about Jesus!" After assenting to Alfred's decision, Mrs. Stuart remarked that she was surprised to find such sublime and stupendous truths so simplified. Did Mrs. Lesley think the children really understood what was read to them? She would be happy to look through the little hymn-book some time, and if she approved of it would get one for Alfred. Rising

to return to her own room, Mrs. Stuart said, in reply to the earnest entreaties of the child, backed by Mrs. Lesley's request, that he might remain—" If Alfred is quiet and contented he may stay a little longer ; but if he becomes rude, please to send him to me." She little thought that of the active and restless little group *he* was the *most* quiet ; among the happy children, the happiest !

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE WARNING.

"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."—Isaiah, xxx. 21.

ON the following morning Mrs. Lesley was desired to step into Mrs. Stuart's room at her convenience. Agreeably with the request, as soon as her children were gone out to walk, she obeyed the summons. After sundry prefatory subjects had been discussed, Mrs. Stuart took the opportunity of remarking that she thought Mrs. Lesley's plan of teaching religious truths to such very young children must be premature; that they could not possibly understand the subject; that, indeed, she thought it almost a profanity of such sacred topics to speak so familiarly of them, and, at all events, very much calculated to make the children gloomy, perhaps to the injury of their health. That she had thought it already preyed upon Alfred's spirits, for he was not anything like so cheerful as formerly. Mrs. Stuart might have said *so naughty* as he before had been. For the truth was, that while no longer dreaded for his mischievous propensi-

ties, he was more beloved, and not any the less cheerful. Escaping at least half the scoldings and crying fits, which his former wilfulness had deservedly occasioned, being now more obedient; he was more uniformly contented and happy. But poor Mrs. Stuart was one of "them who call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" who are "wise in (their) own eyes, and prudent in (their) own sight!" Mrs. Lesley remarked, in reply, that, taking the Scriptures for her guide, she believed it right to bring "*young children*" to Jesus, since he himself had encouraged their approach, and corrected his officious disciples for forbidding them to come. So that, upon the authority of the Lord Jesus, the error lay, not in bringing them too early, but in hindering them from coming, however young, and by whatever means, whether by opposition, or neglect, or any other hindrance. "Besides," continued Mrs. Lesley, "we have a direct and incontrovertible command in Deut. vi. 5-9.—'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou

sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.'—Thus," argued Mrs. Lesley, "so far from being a profanation of sacred Truth to make it a familiar theme; every day, nay, every hour, should be consecrated to this holy purpose. For they are *blood-bought hours*, and, therefore, they are meet for the Master's use, and we responsible for their occupation in accordance with his most reasonable directions."—"But," replied Mrs. Stuart, "these commands may allude to older children."—"There is no such restriction in the sacred text," rejoined Mrs. Lesley; "'your children' must mean *all* our children, since no exceptions are made; besides which, we are told, 'And Jesus called a *little* child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become *as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,' &c.—Matt. xviii. 2, 3. And, again, 'And they brought *young* children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw

it he was *much displeased*, and said unto them, Suffer the *little* children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.'—Mark, x. 13, 14. And in Luke, xviii. 15, 'They brought unto him also *infants*.' Can anything be more explicit? Indeed," continued Mrs. Lesley, warming with the glowing subject, so fraught with the eternal interests of the children, "the chief danger lies in neglecting to bring them **EARLY ENOUGH**. The Scriptures abound with persuasions and encouragements to early piety. I certainly believe that if half the time occupied in assuring them of our own love, were spent in teaching them that there is a good Father in heaven, infinitely better and kinder than their own parents, we should realise, in our own happy experience, that promise of our God, 'I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.'—Isaiah, xliv. 3—5. Do you not recollect the memorable reply of the Lord himself to the scepticism of the chief priests and scribes, when they were offended at

the hosannahs of the children, and said, contemptuously, ‘Hearest thou what these say? Jesus saith unto them, *yea*; have ye never read, out of the mouths of *babes* and *sucklings* thou hast *perfected praise?*’”

Mrs. Lesley felt the importance of arresting this fleeting opportunity, which she had so long and ardently desired. She reflected how soon, in all probability, such seasons would have passed away, to return no more to her; and looked up to the fountain of truth and wisdom for aid to improve this. She alluded to the approaching separation of Mrs. Stuart from her little son, and expressed her deep sympathy with her in the dreaded trial. Then urged her, for the sake of her own peace hereafter, so to teach the dear child now, as to be spared a single regret, or pang of self-reproach, when all opportunities of doing so were removed far from her. Poor Mrs. Stuart, touched upon a chord which vibrated to the lightest breath, wiped away the gushing tears, and sat with more patience and humility than she had at first evinced. Mrs. Lesley wept too—“Faithful are the wounds of a friend,” and in the exercise of that friendship she still strove to ward off a far heavier calamity impending over her, in the consequences of that dangerous idolatry which so evidently characterised

Mrs. Stuart's attachment to her child. Regaining her composure, Mrs. Lesley slowly repeated the first and greatest commandment—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thine heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," and then proved, to a demonstration, that Alfred was loved more than God. "Inquire of your own heart, my dear madam," said Mrs. Lesley; "is not the will of my child continually consulted by me, with much anxiety, to ascertain it correctly, and in the entire submission of my own; and is the will of God *so* consulted by me? Is not the child engrossing all my affections, to the utter exclusion of God? or did I ever, for a moment, love God *as well* as I love Alfred?"—Mrs. Lesley paused, but there was no reply, and she continued—"Yet 'God is love!' infinite, unchangeable love to us! and all his dealings towards us are in strict accordance with his character. He has given us a being, with the intention of making us participants in the eternal joy which he has purchased and prepared for us, by the costly sacrifice of his Son, his only, and well-beloved Son, whom he hath freely given up for us all. And it is in order to effect our reconciliation to himself that all the machinery of his Providence is arranged. It is easy to trace his benevolent intentions to you in

the bestowal of your dear child. You had wandered away from God into those paths of the world's misnamed pleasures, the end of which is death. You were unhappy, and when there was no eye to pity you, God pitied you, and, in order to win your affections back to himself, he bestowed upon you one of the costliest gems in his exhaustless treasury—a young immortal! This 'embryo angel' he has charged you, in his revealed word, to educate for his high court, to train for heaven. Now, had any earthly friend sent to you a valuable gift, although not of such inestimable worth as this, had you not known him previously, and never before received from him any token of regard, yet how, as you looked upon his gift, and learned that it was an expression of his love for you, would your heart warm and go out after the donor! You would, at once, earnestly consider how best you could express to him your gratitude and affection. But, alas! some points of the figure are widely different in this instance. This was a priceless gift, crowning the countless number which had preceded it! Your almighty Friend has striven, from moment to moment, from day to day, and years have not exhausted his patient and continued endeavours to *win your heart*, but all in vain! And upon this last precious bestowal,

with which he hoped, at least, to arouse you to consideration and awaken your gratitude, you have positively summed up your whole heart's affections in one great amount, and lavishly bestowed it upon the *gift*, to the utter exclusion, from your heart's sanctuary, of the gracious giver! Surely this should have been enough to have excited his indignation, exhausted his matchless patience, and tired his unwearied love! But, no! there, at the barred door of your affections, he still stands, crying, in tones of melting tenderness—‘Daughter, give me thine heart!—God still is love!’” Mrs. Lesley paused, for she had spoken faithfully, and every nerve thrilled with the intensity of her desire to arrest the steps of her friend in her career of forgetfulness of God! How, then, was she pained when Mrs. Stuart thus repulsed her—“Oh! I cannot, indeed; I am no enthusiast!” For a moment Mrs. Lesley was too much disappointed to proceed, but, looking round upon the room, she thought that the day would probably arrive when she should sit down there alone, reflecting upon this occasion, and willing to give worlds, if possessed of them, to secure the repetition of this opportunity. The anticipation instantly nerved her to a renewed appeal. “I neglected,” said Mrs. Lesley, “in glancing at the goodness

of God to you, to mention, prominently, the greatest expression of his love, which eclipses all the rest. It is true that you may remain unmoved by all besides; but this is enough to melt a heart of stone! We had broken the holy law of God, in the commission of the first known sin, and came under the curse. For the Scripture saith, ‘Cursed is *every one* that *continueth not* in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them.’—‘The soul that *sinneth*, it shall die!’ Oh! the love which, by such fearfully solemn denunciations fenced off transgression, and held on (if I may so speak) upon the human soul, restraining it from rushing to eternal ruin! But, alas! it was all in vain—we sinned! not merely *once*, which had been *enough*, for the law is to be kept whole and entire, and the *first* transgression of our *obedience* renders us *disobedient*, and stamps rebellion upon the soul. ‘For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of *all*.’—James, ii. 10. But we, we have sinned, with a high hand and a stretched-out arm. Leaving out of the question every command but the first and greatest, let us see if we can remember any moment of our lives in which we loved God *more* than our pleasures, our friends, and ourselves: can we remember a

single occasion? No; on the contrary, we have loved all these things *more than God*, while he has not been in all our thoughts! Oh! base ingratitude! ‘We have sinned, and come short of the glory of God!’ Eternal Justice had announced the fiat—‘Without shedding of blood there is no remission!’ How could we escape? The God of Love beheld our lost condition; his heart yearned over us to save, and he looked to see if there was any intercessor, and found none—none *great enough*, none *good enough*, to bear the punishment of *all sin*. Then he turned towards the only one who could be ‘*mighty to save*,’—His Son! The fellow of the Almighty! But how could he give him up?—His *only Son*! His *sinless Son*! who was ‘Rejoicing always before him!’ ‘Without whom was there not anything made that was made;’ who had ‘Spread out the heavens as a curtain, and hung the earth upon nothing;’ who was ‘The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;’ who had lain in the bosom of his Father through a past eternity. Truly, his blood would expiate the guilt of ten thousand worlds! But could he resign *him*, to endure the ignominy due to the rebel family of man? Could he deliver up his Son for the world’s offences? Hear him who knew well what

was in the heart of the Father, even Jesus :—  
‘For God *so loved the world* that he gave his  
only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in  
him should not perish, but have everlasting life!’  
And can you not love him for this?’ Mrs.  
Lesley paused again for a reply, which was in  
all respects a synonyme with the preceding. It  
was very evident that the gift of God’s Son  
appeared to make less impression upon Mrs.  
Stuart than that of her own son. Seeing which,  
Mrs. Lesley resumed ; “ You may now deceive  
yourself by saying, ‘ I shall be a lady for ever : so  
that thou (dost) not lay these things to thy heart,  
neither (dost) remember the *latter end* of it ! ’  
Isaiah, xlviij. 7. But have you ‘ made a covenant  
with death,’ and an ‘ agreement with the grave ? ’  
Learn betimes, my dear friend, that God is ‘ a  
jealous God,’ and will not share your affections  
with another, nor tolerate a rival in your heart.  
*Alas ! what will you do in the end thereof ? I*  
beseech you let him, whose you are at so costly  
a price, reign upon the throne of your heart’s  
best affections ; then shall Alfred sit upon the  
footstool, and become to you a blessing.”—“ My  
good Mrs. Lesley,” replied Mrs. Stuart, “ this  
is too much ; I read my prayers every morning,  
and, when conveniently circumstanced, I go to  
church ; you would have me an enthusiast in

religion."—"I would, indeed," returned her Mentor; "and why not? Did you ever blame the statesman, the poet, or the artist for enthusiasm? Nay, did you ever admire such a character, if devoid of enthusiasm? You know well that to say of one such, 'he is an enthusiast in his profession,' is to pay him a high compliment; is to say, he is in possession of that energy, devotedness, and attachment to his pursuit, which must ensure eminence, admiration, and success. And, strange to say, the higher the degree of his enthusiasm, the higher the ratio of your esteem. Shall, then, the possession of religion, the most sublime, the loveliest, and the loftiest exercise of the human mind, be estimated by an exactly opposite rule? Is it not more worthy your ambition to live for an unending state, than for the transient life that now is, with all its evanescent distinctions, honours, and pleasures? Is it not more worthy your aim to be possessed of a spotless robe of light and immortality, of a crown of eternal glory, of one of the 'many mansions'—an inheritance amongst the saints in light?—to dwell in the sunshine of 'His favour (which) is life,' and his 'loving-kindness (which) is better than life?' This be my ambition; be it yours also. In the light of the reconciled countenance of Jehovah, the

trappings and parade of rank and power, with all the glare and glitter of this world, appear but as the brilliant colours of a bubble, when compared with the ‘far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory !’”

All this time Mrs. Lesley had remained standing. Uninvited to seat herself, she had leaned against the mantel-piece for support. Her auditor had summoned her, in the pride and anger of her heart, with the intention of affixing to her principles and practice the accusation of error; and now, as the arrows of conviction, pointed by an accusing conscience, entered into the recesses of her soul, she quailed beneath its power. There was an evident expression in Mrs. Stuart’s manner of “Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee.”

The procrastinating desire was reluctantly gratified, and the faithful monitor went her way,—perhaps to mourn over the perilous condition of her friend’s soul,—and, perhaps, to pray!

## CHAPTER VII.

## DISQUIETUDE.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God."—Psalm xlvi. 5.

"For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother."—Proverbs, iv. 3.

IT was only a few days after the conversation between the ladies that little Alfred was taken over, by his mamma and nurse, to sit, for the last time, for his second portrait. He was, indeed, an object which could scarcely meet the eye unadmired. "I can recall him very vividly as he stood before me that day," said Mrs. Lesley, in speaking of the circumstance. "He wore a richly embroidered white frock, displaying his finely formed breast and shoulders. A broad scarlet sash was loosely tied round his waist. His jet-black hair was parted high off his steep brow in rich waves. I thought, as he entered my room, in high spirits, to say good-bye, that I had never before seen, in a child, such an impersonation of intelligence and beauty. Little did I then dream that, before a week had passed away, I should behold that fair form of light, and life, and loveliness, laid in the cold stillness of death!"

Mrs. Stuart had already intimated to Mrs. Lesley that, as soon as her brother (who was now hourly expected) should arrive, it was her

intention to return to her father's house, to make final arrangements for the approaching separation from her child. As Mrs. Lesley looked after the happy party, her heart ached in sympathy with that mother, whose affections must so soon be lacerated by a separation from the object in whom they were centered. Returning to her quiet parlour, she thought of the mother's breaking heart, when alone in her narrow berth, listening to the dashing of the waves, as they bore her every moment farther from her beloved little son. She thought, too, of the motherless child, in his strange home, watching, with heaving breast and swimming eyes, the caresses received by other children; and at night, laid in his untucked bed, and turning his little face towards the wall, to weep himself into the dreamy visions of her he loved so well. She turned to her own prattlers for comfort, but this only added intensity to the sorrow. There was a weight hanging about her heart that she strove in vain to shake off. They were late, too, in returning, and she began to fear some accident had happened. She was glad, indeed, to hear again their voices, and would have gone in, but feared to hinder them in getting their late tea. Besides, she heard Mrs. Stuart speaking angrily both to the Ayah and Alfred, whose peevish tone of voice indicated, at the least, that he was

much tired, if not unwell. He had to wait to be taken to bed, until his mamma, partly from opposition, and partly from self-indulgence, was first attended to. The Ayah was putting up her hair while she was reading, and little Alfred, laying his weary head upon the table, when his changeable mother, looking towards him, thought that he seemed ill; she carefully observed him for a few minutes, and noticed that he became alternately pale and flushed; his eyes were suffused, and she recognised in them a portentous kind of expression. Mrs. Stuart was so well acquainted with the first indications of fever that she grew instantly alarmed, and sent for Mrs. Lesley to aid her with advice. A warm bath was recommended, and speedily prepared. No sooner had Alfred been put to bed, than Mrs. Stuart began to upbraid herself in the bitterest terms of self-reproach. She accused herself of thoughtlessness, in taking him across the river on so cold a day, and more especially returning at so late an hour. She was distressed at having wearied him, by standing so long with the artist. Then, again, to save the expense of a car, he had been exposed to a shower of rain, and she charged herself with having trifled away many times the amount of the car-hire. She then remembered that he complained of being very tired, and

hung behind with the appearance of extreme lassitude, when, thinking him idle, and feeling annoyed at the hindrance, she had slapped him, and spoken very harshly, and that he mildly remarked, as if much wounded—"Mamma, you do not speak so unkindly to my cousins; why do you not speak kindly to me?" This last recollection broke down her wounded spirit into a flood of bitter tears. Mrs. Lesley endeavoured to sooth her poor distressed friend, and to calm her apprehensions. Much weariness, and, perhaps, some trifling cold, also, might have produced the effects, and she trusted that, after the warm bath, all would be well in the morning. Although she argued reasonably, there was an antagonist conviction in her own mind, which she strove in vain to quell. A dark foreboding gathered round her heart; the words fell soulless from her lips, until she almost accused herself of insincerity. And yet, when she examined the ground of her suspicions, she could not give place to any serious alarm. And so they parted; the one to her calm sleep, beside her happy children, who lay down with prayer and awoke with praise, arousing their mamma for an early lesson in Bible wonders,—the other to a sleepless vigil over the feverish tossings of her dreaming, unconscious child.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE ALARM.

"There is no hope!"—Isaiah, lvii. 10.

"The sorrows of death compassed me."—Psalm xviii. 4.

ON the following morning, before Mrs. Lesley had left her room, she had received several messages, hurrying her down stairs to Alfred, who, she was informed, was much worse, and continually inquiring for her. She hastened to obey the summons, and found him sitting up in bed, his cheeks highly flushed, and his hot hands spread out upon the sheet, vainly endeavouring to cool their feverish burning. He smiled sweetly as she entered, saying, "Misse Lessee, I am very ill." His mamma described how they had passed the night, and eagerly inquired what Mrs. Lesley thought of Alfred, who recommended her to send for medical aid without delay, but yet held out the hope that, with the blessing of God, by the use of proper means, the fever would be speedily subdued. Seeing the dear child's earnest look, which seemed to say, "Speak to me about that which I love to hear," she took courage to gratify his desire, although at the expense of incurring the displeasure of

his mamma, who seemed to expect her inquiries restricted to the state of his health. Mrs. Lesley feeling, however, a conviction that, if she let this favourable moment pass, another would not be afforded, seized the flitting opportunity, and asked, "Alfred, do you remember your sins?"—"Yes," replied he, drooping his head. "Do you love Jesus because he died for your sins?"—"Yes, Misce Lessee," rejoined he, looking up again, with a smile of sweet satisfaction. "Would you like to go and live with him for ever?"—"Yes," responded the child, with deep earnestness, turning up his eyes towards heaven, in a fixed gaze. He continued looking upwards for some minutes, as if in deep thought. He was spoken to several times, but did not seem to hear. At this Mrs. Stuart's fears were excited to a high degree, and shrieking—"Alfred! Alfred! speak to me; oh, speak to me again!" she sank fainting on the floor. The shriek aroused the child from his strange reverie, and, as if awaking from a dream, he cried out, in tones of affectionate anxiety, "Mamma! mamma!"

From having so recently learned to speak in English, little Alfred had no great store of terms in which to express himself,—his fine intelligent countenance being an excellent commentary on his short sentences. But although he spoke

little, he understood almost everything that was said to him.

From this time all was confusion. Doctors were hurriedly summoned, one after another, by the distracted mother. She lost, in her extreme excitement, the power to articulate a sentence. Fearfulness and trembling had taken hold upon her. No sooner had the medical men seen the little sufferer than they expressed to Mrs. Lesley their united opinion of the hopelessness of the case. The disease was pronounced "malignant scarlet," and the medicines were given, not with the least hope of checking the progress of the fever, but for the alleviation of his sufferings, and the satisfaction of knowing that every available remedy had been tried. The chief object appeared to be, to prevent the contagion extending. Thus, various plans were adopted for the fumigation of the house. Mrs. Lesley's children were to be immediately removed, and it was hinted that she had better accompany them. A sick-nurse was to be engaged, and Mrs. Stuart, if possible, prevailed upon to remain in the next room. The directions were, as nearly as it was practicable, complied with, excepting that Mrs. Stuart, of course, kept an unceasing watch beside her unconscious child, and Mrs. Lesley could not be prevailed upon to forsake her friend

in this hour of trial. Mrs. Stuart lay in a state of stupor, from which she was only aroused by the murmurings of the delirious child, as "Mamma" broke upon the stillness of that darkened chamber, and reached her ear—her heart! Oh! what a forlorn mother was this! It had, indeed, needed the arm of omnipotent love to have sustained her now; but she was "without God and without hope in the world." Ah! what would she now have given to have had a friend of long and intimate acquaintance in her neglected and forsaken God! A friend whom she might have summoned to her side, with one imploring look or an unexpressed desire, and walked up out of this arid wilderness of affliction, "leaning on her beloved." But now, in her calamity, when her fear had come as desolation, and her destruction as a whirlwind, she found that the stay on which she had leaned was

"A broken reed at best, but (now) a spear,  
On whose sharp point peace bleeds, and hope expires!"

## CHAPTER IX.

## DESOLATION.

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?"—Jeremiah, xii. 5.

"For sadness teacheth us the truth of things,  
Which had been hid beneath the crown of flowers  
That gladness wears; and the few quiet hours,  
And heavenward-rising thoughts, which sorrow brings,  
Are better than a life in pleasure's bowers,  
Drinking the poisonous chalice, which she pours  
To quench our heavenly spirit's murmurings."

THE dear child lay dozing all that and the succeeding day; occasionally he murmured still "Mamma!" "Ayah!" then dozed again, before their quick response had reached his ear. His parching lips and burning brow too surely indicated the fever-fires which were scorching up the fountain of his life. Once he awoke, and called "Mamma!!" She flew to his side; he wished to sit up, and she raised him in bed, and placed before him some new toys, which her mistaken love had kindly provided for him; but they had lost their charm to the dim eyes of the dying boy. She sent for Mrs. Lesley, to share her dawning hope, by seeing him able to sit up, and implored him to name anything in the world he wished for, that

she could procure for him ; but before she had concluded her kind and tempting offer, he laid down and slept again. All that long, long night, his mother, "refusing to be comforted," still kept watch, with the Ayah and sick-nurse, beside the dying child. At length the morning dawned. It was a bright, glad Sabbath morning ; but the inmates of that sad chamber recognised no morning, and knew no rest. The day passed just as the night had done. The forlorn appearance of the sick room was most distressing. The light of the window was carefully darkened, to prevent the intrusion of a single ray ; while, to admit air, the bed-curtains were rolled up to the tester. The tables and drawers were covered with medicines, which had been tried and relinquished for others, with half-filled cups and empty glasses ; while here and there were glittering expensive toys, which seemed to mock the vanity of each cherished hope. The carpets were removed, the room sprinkled with chloride of lime, and a small vessel, standing on the hearth, emitted clouds of fumigating gas, to counteract the infectious air. When Mrs. Lessley went to take her place for the night, beside that dying bed, the Ayah sat upon the floor, rocking herself to and fro, and uttering low moans and broken sentences, in Hindostanee.

The sick-nurse was endeavouring to moisten the parched mouth of the dear sufferer, now burnt to blackness. The silver cord is loosening, and the golden bowl will soon be broken ; for the fountain is nearly dry, and the cistern well-nigh exhausted. The worn-out mother now lay beside her dying child, the doctor having vainly insisted on her removal. As Mrs. Lesley drew near the bed, she cast her eyes wildly around, and cried out, "Oh! for the hours, and days, and weeks, and years, that I have suffered to pass away, now lost to me for ever! My child is dying, and I have taught him nothing of the world to which he is going, nor of the God he is about to meet!" And, saying this, she wrung her hands and tore her hair, and then, in a wild despairing voice, exclaimed, "Ayah! you have a child, have you not?"—"Yes, misse," replied the Ayah. "Take warning from me, and teach her to love and fear God." Mrs. Lesley had been for some minutes vainly striving to obtain the attention of her forlorn friend, now abandoning herself to deep agonising grief. At length she succeeded, and, in a calm but firm tone of voice, said, "But dear Alfred knew and loved his Saviour, and is not going into the presence of an unknown God. It was his daily delight to hear of Jesus, and in a few hours he will rest in

the bosom of that compassionate Saviour, and be safely folded in those dear arms, once extended in agony upon the cross for him and for us."

Language fails to describe the reception of this new feature of the case. As a drowning and exhausted mariner, cast by an engulfing wave far upon the firm beach, folded in the arms of rejoicing friends, opens his wondering eyes, and scarcely believes but that he dreams, so did Mrs. Stuart, staring wildly into Mrs. Lesley's face, grasping her hand, stroking her cheek, pressing thereon her burning lips, at last find language. "Is it possible? did he know him? did he love to hear about him, and be with him for ever? Thank God!" continued she, retaining Mrs. Lesley's hand; "thank God that our feet ever crossed the threshold of this house!" Then, addressing Mrs. Lesley, she continued—"God will reward you, I cannot; my jewels are dust in payment of this; take them all; never let me see them again!" Mrs. Lesley shook her head in refusal. "Ah, I know," rejoined the speaker, "you told me that a crown of glory, and a robe of immortal beauty, would alone satisfy you. Oh! that I had made the same choice; but I shall perish and see him afar off! I am a lost sinner—Oh! I am lost!"—"Jesus came to save the lost," said Mrs.

Lesley. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life!'"—"What did you say"—interrupted Mrs. Stuart—"about my child? What did you teach him? Ah! ah! I have to thank a stranger for all my child knows of God and of the world to which he is going! But tell me, what did he love to hear?" Mrs. Lesley repeated the texts—"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;"—"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." She then read, from the children's hymn book, a few of Alfred's favourites, one of which was—

" Around the throne of God in heaven,  
 Thousands of children stand;  
 Whose sins are all through Christ forgiven,  
 A holy, happy band!  
 Singing, Glory, glory !

" What brought them to that world above,  
 That heaven so bright and fair;  
 Where all is joy, and peace, and love,—  
 How came those children there?  
 Singing, Glory, glory !

" Because the Saviour shed his blood,  
 To put away their sin;  
 Bathed in that pure and precious blood,  
 Behold them white and clean!  
 Singing, Glory, glory !

" On earth they sought the Saviour's grace,  
 On earth they loved his name ;  
 And now they see his blessed face,  
 And stand before the lamb,  
 Singing, Glory, glory ! "

Dear little Alfred was rapidly drawing near to the home of his Saviour and his God. The nurse had already signified to Mrs. Lesley that his feet and legs were chilled in death. At intervals, Mrs. Lesley repeated texts calculated to sustain the mind of the afflicted mother in the final shock, now so nearly approaching, as, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and none else."—"Call upon me in the time of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—"My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."—"He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted."—"A bruised reed shall he not break!"

Mrs. Stuart now requested to hear again Alfred's favourite hymn. Mrs. Lesley complied, and read—

" Around the throne of God in heaven,  
 Ten thousand children stand—"

"Ten thousand and one!" exclaimed she, as the dear child rolled upon his back, opened his black-parched lips, and breathed his last. "He's gone!" exclaimed the nurse. "Bless the Lord,

O our souls, and all that is within us praise his holy name!" repeated Mrs. Lesley. "Let us pray!" And as all kneeled around the bed, with suppressed sobs, in few words she commended his disembodied spirit to the bosom of the Lord Jesus, imploring supporting grace for the bereaved mother.

When they arose, Mrs. Stuart was uncovering the loved form, and looking upon it with a last, long, tearless look of love. She passionately kissed the unconscious frame, commencing at the brow, and travelling down to the icy feet, she continued wildly kissing them until she was borne away into another room.

Mrs. Lesley remained with the disconsolate mother, who, for some time, "refused to be comforted." It was the aim of her friend to turn away her bewildered mind from her own loss, to the contemplation of her child in glory. "*God is love!*" began Mrs. Lesley, "'Too wise to err, too good to be unkind!' The dear child is removed from you in love. The omniscient eye of God read the page of Alfred's existence from beginning to end. What, if he saw that the training he should receive would place him in circumstances of trial, in which he would make shipwreck of his soul; and, beholding this, extended his kind arm to snatch him from the

impending ruin. ‘He doeth all things well !’ Is it not well ? What if he had delayed the deliverance until you had arrived at your distant home, and then removed him, when he had no dear mamma to watch beside his dying bed ? Would you not have suffered unnecessarily the pangs of the first parting, while your separation in death, under such circumstances, had been aggravated a thousand-fold ? Is it not well ?

“Or, supposing you had been permitted to rear him to maturity, and, by the good guardian-ship of God, he had been prevented from falling, then what would be the height of your ambition for your child ? Why, you would have fitted him to mingle in the society of a court ; and, could your fondest hopes have been gratified, he had been the denizen of a palace and a companion of princes. Ah, my dear friend, this is only a mother’s love ; the love of God has provided for him far better things than these. He hath made him a ‘prince of the blood-royal of heaven !’ He hath clothed him in a garment of spotless and imperishable beauty, and introduced him into the society of that illustrious throng who ‘serve him day and night.’ Jesus hath brought him ‘unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.

To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' He hath for ever secured him from sin, and sorrow, and death, and folded him safely in the arms of everlasting love—and is it not well?"—"It is well!" responded the bereaved one. And now the tear-sluices were opened, and for the first time she wept! A flood of refreshing tears gushed forth, and her pent-up, bursting heart was relieved. "Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus," rejoined Mrs. Lesley. "Mingle with your tears the voice of praise to Him who, beholding him hath loved him, and lovingly selected him from the little group who clustered around our family altar, to crown him with immortality. Let not a single breath of repining dim the lustre of his joys, nor an ungrateful murmur mingle discordantly with the seraphic songs he sings—

" Around the throne of God in heaven,  
Thousands of children stand;  
Whose sins are all through Christ forgiven,  
A holy, happy band!  
Singing, Glory, glory!"

"Bless the Lord, O my soul!" exclaimed the consoled mother.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE VACANT THRONE.

"What must I do to be saved?"—Acts, xvi. 30.

"Preach the gospel to every creature."—Mark, xvi. 15.

AFTER taking a few hours' rest, Mrs. Lesley returned to Mrs. Stuart's room. Drawing near to her bedside, she inquired how she had passed the remainder of the night, for Mrs. Lesley had dreaded her first awakening to the sad reality. "After you left me," replied Mrs. Stuart, "I slept for some hours, and was awakened by the voice of an angel singing, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul!' I listened, and thought it was your voice, but, Oh, so ravishingly sweet! As I awoke, it died away upon my ear." Almost afraid to trust herself to speak respecting the sad bereavement, Mrs. Lesley, in order to renew their strength, proposed prayer, to which Mrs. Stuart cheerfully assented.

From this time, Mrs. Stuart would scarcely suffer her friend to leave her side for a few hours, to expedite the funeral arrangements. "Oh, you have been long; come and sing to me as you used to sing to your children, while Alfred listened."—"Now, another hymn."—

"And now, tell me how to prepare for that world whither my child is gone. But I shall never reach that happy place. No; I am lost! Is there any hope? Was a sinner so vile as I ever saved?"—"Oh, yes," rejoined her companion; "Mary Magdalene was saved, out of whom the Lord cast seven devils. Paul, the Apostle, was once the dreaded Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the church, who had even compelled men to blaspheme, and was stained with the blood of the martyr Stephen. He, too, found mercy, and has left this testimony—'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to *save sinners*, of whom I am chief!' The thief upon the cross had sinned down to the very lees of life, and cried, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,' and was saved; for Jesus, although suffering the cruel agonies of the cross, instantly responded to that piercing cry, saying, 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!'"—"What did the dying thief say?" cried Mrs. Stuart. Then, having learned the words, she said—"Now hold me up in your arms, while I pray all the day—Lord, remember me, now thou art in thy kingdom! Does Jesus hear me too?"—"He does," replied Mrs. Lesley, "even as he did the expiring thief—PRAY ON!"

Mrs. Lesley wept, as well she might! She wept at the deeply affecting humility of the awakened soul before her; but she overlooked the infinitely more affecting view of this soul, now panting after God, brought to the very foot of the cross, yet turned, at this critical moment, from the contemplation of the *smiling face of a well-pleased God in Christ*, to the prayer of the dying thief. The sad result of which was, that upon the *now VACANT THRONE* of her *affections* was thrust the *duty of prayer, in THE PLACE OF JESUS!* How often since has Mrs. Lesley bitterly lamented her failure to make known to the anxious inquirer the simple gospel, at this most auspicious moment of her affecting case. The kind providence of a gracious God had furthered the progress of this interesting work, by throwing down every hindrance; every valley he had exalted, every mountain he had laid low; the crooked he had made straight, and the rough places plain,—that the glory of the Lord might be revealed! The wanderer had been led to the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of peace with God; and yet here, from the very lintel of “the door,” the inefficient guide let down a curtain of darkness between the sinner and the Saviour. The awakened sinner, in the gloom of her own unenlightened mind, was feeling about,

if haply she might find the Lord, whilst the blessed object of her search was crying, “Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!” The errand Mrs. Lesley was sent upon was *simply to bear a message*. Oh, that she had not exceeded her commission, but only delivered the message entrusted to her—the “good tidings of great joy!” She had been successful in showing the happy children that “more excellent way;” as she still remarks, “Whoever thought of teaching children *anything else* than the *truth about Jesus!* Alas! on that lamentable occasion I forgot that ‘Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God *as a little child* shall in no wise enter therein.’” Mrs. Lesley had fallen into a *common error*. Because it was an intelligent adult who inquired, “What must I do to be saved?” the misguided teacher, leaving the simplicity of the *children’s way to God*—the *way Christ Jesus*—turned off into another well-beaten track, and cried, “Pray for a new heart”—“You must be born again,” and then added the gratuitous recommendation, “Therefore pray for regeneration. You cannot perform this great work yourself, and, therefore, pray for the Holy Spirit!” Poor Mrs. Stuart! she prayed long and ardently, and then asked despairingly, “What more can I do?” and was

directed to "PRAY ON!" Alas! she is, perhaps, praying yet, if she has not relapsed into a state of more carnal security than that from which she was at first awakened. It is time now to suppose a lesson, which it had been well, indeed, for the comfort and satisfaction of Mrs. Lesley to this day, and for the spiritual and eternal peace of her friend, had she given on that occasion.

In reply to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Oh! that she had answered, with Paul, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!" or, "Christ died for *our* sins," yours and mine. "He tasted death for every man," and, therefore, for you! "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 8. If Christ is a satisfaction, then is Eternal Justice satisfied, and we have a well-pleased God to draw near to and call "Our Father!" True, thou hast sinned and come under condemnation, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things written in the book of the law to do them." But, "Behold I bring you tidings of great joy!"—"There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for *all*!" You are asking for eternal life—hear the testimony of God, "And *this* is the record

that *God hath given* to us eternal life, and this life is *IN HIS SON!*" 1 John, v. 10, 11. "And this is life eternal, that they may *know thee*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Therefore, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace!" Do you ask what have I to learn about him?—that "God is love!"—that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—"All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of *us all*."—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the *world!*" And now he says, he "willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn to him and live," crying, "Turn ye, turn ye! for why will ye die?"—"Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the *propitiation for our sins.*" "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world!*" My dear friend, you are beseeching God, but are overlooking the great fact that he is beseeching you. Hear what is written, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Thus, you see, that while it is the desire of your heart to be reconciled to God, you

are forgetting the precious truth that He is infinitely more desirous that you should be at peace with him. Do you ask, "What must I do that I might work the works of God?" Hear Jesus reply—"This is the work of God, that ye *believe on him whom he hath sent!*" Hear Paul, or rather the Holy Spirit by Paul, "But to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the *ungodly*, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Romans, iv. 5. And how so? Because "The Lord is *well pleased* for *his righteousness' sake!*" After the Lord Jesus had fulfilled all righteousness he suffered the penalty of your transgression of the law. "Hear Him"—He is "The Truth!"—"Hear Him"—with his last breath crying—"It is finished!" Yes, "more than 1800 years ago," the great work necessary for your salvation was *finished*, and now there remains nothing for you to do, but to *know* and to *believe* that that great work is done!

Again, do you ask, But is it done for me? God, in his word, replies, "He tasted death for every man!" Christ, in his parting instructions, commands—"Preach the gospel (good news) to *every creature!*" You cannot possibly exclude yourself from the wide pale which includes "every man"—"every creature!" "Fear not!" "When Jesus died for *all*, he died for

*thee*, and when he *died* for thee, he *did enough* for thee to *die with*.” He did *as much* for thee as he did for the thief upon the cross, or for Mary Magdalene, or for Saul of Tarsus. Ah, “Is he not the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely?” And now God inquires, “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father?” Had Mrs. Lesley thus unveiled the simple gospel, that great “power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth”—had she turned the attention of the inquirer *away* and *outside* of everything,—her life, her heart, her sins, her very prayers, and even her faith itself, *excluding every object*, while the soul looked FIRST ON THE FINISHED WORK of the Lord Jesus, finished for all, and, therefore, for her,—she had then been *working* not *against*, but *with* the Blessed Spirit, in presenting to the soul “the things concerning Christ,” in “leading (her) into all truth”—the truth about Jesus first! And *thus* had she been *born again!* for “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” 1 John, v. 1. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God.*” 1 Peter, i. 23. “Of his own will begat he us, *with the word of truth.*” James, i. 18. And thus Mrs. Lesley might have rejoiced with Paul, saying, “For in

Christ Jesus I have *begotten* you *through the Gospel*," (1 Cor. iv. 15.) and heard the spirit of her friend, singing with Mary, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!" Then had been given "Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Mrs. Stuart had then "gone on her way rejoicing," bearing with her the *glad tidings* to the ends of the earth.

## CHAPTER XI.

## LAMENTATION.

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"  
—Jeremiah, viii. 22.

MRS. STUART was, indeed, awakened to a sense of her own guilt and danger. She knew that she was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." She saw the folly of her late pursuits, for she had proved their vanity. This was sufficiently evidenced by the circumstance of her now turning away, in alarm and disgust, from all those occupations in which her previous life had been engaged. Sometimes she would say to Mrs. Lesley—"Oh, that you would return with me to India, to remind me continually, lest I should forget God." Alas! she had not yet learned to know "Him, whom to know is life eternal," or there would have been less fear about forgetting him; for "perfect love casteth out fear." She had never feared lest in returning to India she should forget Alfred! No, she loved him too well, and had she learned to love God she had known no fear of forgetting Him. She turned to the ordinances

and ministers of religion for comfort, but found none. Clergymen were summoned to her bedside, to whom she confessed, in deep contrition, the errors of her past life. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was received, but no peace was found. She turned to everything *but Jesus*, while he was still crying, "Come unto me!"—"Oh! thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted"—"Come unto me!"—"All things are delivered unto me of my Father"—"Come unto me and I will give thee rest!"—"Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life!" Oh! that she had known, in this her day, the things which belong unto her peace, and determined—

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee—  
O, Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot—  
O, Lamb of God, I come!"

## CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

## THE PARTING AND THE GRAVE.

"And to make idols, and to find them clay,  
And to bewail that worship."—MRS. HEMANS.

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."—  
Colossians, iii. 2.

UPON the arrival of Mrs. Stuart's father, who had been sent for to accompany her home, she sat up in bed to receive him, crying, in the most affecting manner—"Pity me, pity me, my father—I am childless!" The old gentleman strove in vain to comfort her, waiting while she gained sufficient strength to undertake the journey.

It was nearly three weeks after the decease of the dear child, before Mrs. Stuart could be removed. The little hymn book was carefully preserved by her, as a memento of Alfred's most loved theme.

It was a mournful day to Mrs. Lesley when Mrs. Stuart took her departure. She watched her, from the window, casting her sad, last, lingering look upon the scene of her bereavement, as the carriage slowly drove away.

\* \* \*

There is an old church-yard, in which stand the ruins of an ancient abbey. Over the crumb-

ling walls, and majestic portals, and skeleton frames of large gothic windows, luxuriates the mantling ivy, climbing and clinging about, concealing the decay beneath masses of unfading verdure. Here and there, a broken column may be seen to have fallen from its place, and torn down the foliage in its rude descent, trailing the fresh green leaves and matted tendrils to the ground,—an emblem of those brilliant hopes and clinging affections which here lie dishonoured in the dust.

Near these walls are a few fine old trees, which seem to have outlived the men who knew them in their youth, spreading out their ancient arms, as if to guard the treasured dust, and watch over the deep repose of the sleeping dead. Beneath the shadow of one of these lie the loved remains of

#### THE IDOL CHILD !

Reader, stand with me beside this lowly grave, and meditate upon those sunny opportunities within thy easy grasp to-day, which to-morrow may be removed beyond thy reach for ever.

There are voices about the tomb of “The Idol Child” which speak to *thee*, and their words are words of wisdom. Hearken!—“*All* flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the

flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass." "The grass withereth and the flower falleth away, but the *word of the Lord* endureth for ever!"— "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."—"That thou doest, do quickly."—"Work while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."—"Love not the world."—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols!" Listen—the echoes from a thousand graves repeat—

**"KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS!"**

---

" Thy dead shall live again;  
Their dead bodies shall arise.  
Awake and sing, ye who dwell in dust,  
For thy dew is as the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth shall cast out her dead!"

BENEATH the waving palm-tree's grateful shade,  
The spicy breath of India on thy brow,  
Thou, in thy mother's fond caress hast laid,  
And slept less sweetly than thou sleepest now!

Farewell! we miss thee at the hour of prayer,  
We miss thee when the sacred page is read;  
We to the fields go forth and miss thee there,  
And here we find thee "numbered with the dead!"

Thy earnest voice still ringeth in our ears,  
Persuading and beseeching—"Oh! do come  
And hear about dear Jesus! how his tears  
And sufferings were to bring us to his home!"

Thy spirit now enjoys the promised rest,  
 Within those arms once stretched upon the tree,  
 And thou hast heard his voice pronounce thee blest,—  
 Blest as the bright and sinless angels be !

Thou wert borne far to rest thee here, and sleep  
 This dreamless sleep, which no awaking knows,  
 Till the last trump across thy grave shall sweep,  
 Bursting the cerements of thy long repose !

“A little while”—“sleep on and take thy rest,”  
 Thou shalt “come forth” when Jesus bids thee rise,  
 And hear the gladdening summons, “Come, ye blest !”  
 To join the glorious gathering in the skies.

#### A VOICE FROM THE LORD JESUS TO THE “LITTLE ONES.”

“Suffer the little children to come unto me,” Christ.—Matt. xix. 14.

GLAD child of earth, whose happy voice is ringing  
 Through the green wood, and down the sunny lane,  
 Gay treasures o'er thy path the summer's flinging  
 From daisied plain !

Lichens and mosses, fruit and flowers are springing  
 From “bank and brae,” and from the bright parterre,  
 While thy clear voice in upper tones is singing—  
 “How sweet, how fair !”

Now, ere the deep blue of thine eye hath faded,  
 Now, ere the rose-hue from thy cheek hath fled,  
 Now, ere the light upon thy brow is shaded,—  
 With cloud o'erspread !

Now—ere the spring-day of thy youthful gladness  
 Hath dawned and fitted from thy azure sky ;  
 Ere the dark shades of cank'ring care and sadness  
 Bedim thine eye—

Come thou, and learn how I have loved thy spirit,  
 Ere the old mountains and the hills were made ;  
 How the great penalty of thy demerit  
*On me was laid.*

Learn how I loved thee, when archangels lowly  
 Bowed from their lofty heights and me adored,  
 For ever crying, "Holy, holy, holy!  
 Almighty Lord!"

Learn how I loved thee, when their adoration  
 Fell on mine ear unmoved, while far away  
 To thee, lost child, thou speck in my creation,  
 My thoughts would stray.

Learn how I loved thee, when, heaven's joys forsaking,  
 I left my throne and laid my glory by;  
 Wonder in seraph minds at once awaking  
 To learn for why!

Why did I flee, as though creation waiting,  
 Threatened in ruin to engulf the sphere,  
 While tardily on worn-out axle grating,  
 Till I was there!

There—to restore it to primeval glory;  
 There—to replace the main-spring of creation;  
 The rebel world in childhood had grown hoary  
 With devastation.

There—to deliver from their lost condition  
 Poor erring children of a ruined race;  
 Not waiting their abasement or contrition,  
 I brought them grace!

In the mean manger-cradle did they lay me;  
 Though to mine own I came—received not;  
 Mocked, scourged, and spat upon, at last they slay me—  
 Inhuman blot!

Why came I—why?—all heaven inquired the reason,  
 Asked what had lured me from the bliss above,  
 To suffer in the stead of human treason?  
 And learned 'twas LOVE?

Child of the earth, rejoice! What lies before thee?  
 Pardon, free pardon, from a "well-pleased" God!  
 Because He loved thee did I thus restore thee—  
 The price, my blood!

Child of Redemption, hark! "the heavens are telling"  
 Hints of the glory that is there concealed,  
 Till thou shalt hear salvation's chorus swelling,  
 In bliss revealed.

What hath my streaming blood for thee provided?  
 Raiment all "white and glistening as the sun!"  
*List to me only*, and the heavens divided,  
 Are half thine own!

Heirs of the "many mansions" I've prepared;  
 Joint-heirs with me, ye princes of the skies!  
 My very kingdom hath my free love shared;  
 Lift up your eyes!—

A city glowing with its gemmed foundations,  
 With walls of jasper, and of gates impearled;  
 Behold! wide waving o'er the blissful stations,  
 Banners unfurled!—

Floating across the battlements of heaven,  
 Seest thou the words which all the triumph gives;  
 "Glory to Him who hath hell's fetters riven"—  
*Hath died and lives!*

While all the harpers, harping, catch the story  
 Of Bethlehem's stable and of Calvary's stains!  
 Heaven's radiant arches ringing with the glory,  
 In loudest strains!

"Worthy the Lamb!" they cry; "all praise accords  
 To Him for ever, who for us was slain!  
 While 'King of Kings,' they crown him 'Lord of Lords,'  
 O'er all to reign!"

Child of my love! say, wilt *thou* blessed be?  
 Child of my sorrow! wilt *thou* swell the song?  
 Child of redemption! wilt thou *COME TO ME*,  
 And join the throng?

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